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ABSTRACT

At Weber State University (Utah), teacher educators have collaborated with English faculty to design a pilot program (Hemingway Project) which serves as an initial effort to restructure the teacher education program. The program, funded by the Hemingway Foundation, is intended to provide greater integration of the university experience with actual practice, thereby enhancing student teacher socialization into the profession. Four components of change in the traditional program are discussed: (1) improved collaboration between the university and school districts in the selection of cooperating teachers and school sites; (2) an alternative, school-based setting for teacher education instruction; (3) a two-quarter student teaching experience with an action research emphasis; and (4) graduate credit seminars for cooperating teachers to enhance supervisory skills and techniques. One central issue of the project is investigation of the effects of interdisciplinary, collaborative supervision and on-site, contextual instruction on the teacher education curriculum. (IAH)

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The Hemingway Project: A Collaborative School-based Program for Teacher Certification

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Introduction

Student teachers typically accept the role model of their cooperating teacher over the theoretical model presented in most teacher education programs (Corbett, 1980). National studies (Tomorrow's Teachers, 1986) are promoting a restructured model for the student teaching experience that would provide greater integration of the university experience with actual practice to enhance teacher socialization into the profession. Based on an extended clinical model, college personnel work cooperatively with school district personnel to improve the student teaching experience and to develop a more holistic, integrated training experience for preservice teachers.

At Weber State University, where limited resources restrict full-scale restructuring, teacher educators have collaborated with English educators to design a pilot project to serve as the initial restructuring effort. Private grant monies from the Hemingway Foundation supported four components of change in the traditional program:

1) improved university-school district collaboration in the selection of cooperating teachers and school sites,
2) an alternative, school-based setting for teacher education instruction,
3) a two-quarter student teaching experience with an action research emphasis,
4) seminars (graduate credit granted) for cooperating teachers to enhance supervisory skills and techniques.

Prior to receiving the Hemingway faculty development funds, Weber State was selected as a Carnegie Project 30 school, commissioned to evaluate the current state of its undergraduate education programs as an initial step toward future reform efforts and recruitment of minority faculty. WSU's Project 30 study (1990) recommended teacher educators focus on collaborating with other department supervisors and public school cooperating teachers to improve, in particular, the student teaching component of our program.

Consequently, we narrowed the scope of our project to these objectives:

1) To create an environment in which student teachers will:
   a) feel a sense of efficacy,
   b) draw on personal as well as social resources to create successful learning environments,
   c) make sound instructional decisions rather than simply follow prescriptive texts or programs,
   d) consider a range of alternatives in developing curriculum,
   e) consider an array of teaching strategies to meet particular learner needs,
   f) conduct action research in their classrooms.

2) To affect the predominant socialization pattern that occurs as student teachers attempt to conform to the norms and expectations of their cooperating teachers.

A team of six university faculty (three from Teacher Education, three from English Education) together with eleven veteran teachers representing both jr. high and high school English departments and ten WSU English majors began participation in the project Summer 1990. The project will be completed Spring 1991.

Need for Restructuring Traditional Program

Project 30 data, as well as undergraduate surveys from over 85 practicing student teachers, indicated the need for restructuring WSU's traditional secondary education certification program.

In May of 1989, WSU's Project 30 team sent a questionnaire to 131 secondary school teachers to ascertain their views about their academic preparation at WSUin their major, minor, and teacher education coursework. The teachers targeted for the questionnaire were those who had graduated from WSUin the last five years and were employed in the five surrounding feeder school districts. Questionnaire responses from 53 teachers (40% return rate) provided data which indicated a need to restructure the student teaching experience at Weber State.

Open-ended questions allowed the respondents to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Teacher Education program and recommend improvements. Forty-five percent of the teachers wanted more undergraduate field experiences prior to certification; additional practice in classroom management, discipline techniques, and instructional practices was the most critical need expressed. Improving interpersonal skills with cooperating teachers, administrators, parents, and students appeared to be a pervasive need as well.

Although seventy-one percent of the respondents rated their student teaching experience as satisfying or highly satisfying, their comments recommended processing the experience in-depth through a first year mentoring model. Isolation from their peers during student teaching prevented sharing and analyzing similar experiences and solving mutual problems. Supervision from both the education supervisors and major/minor supervisors needed improvement, with feedback, goals, and progress communciated between supervisors and visits more effectively coordinated and increased. Selection of cooperating teachers needed to be a collaborative effort between districts and the college, assessing the reason for placement and the qualifications of the cooperating teacher more carefully.

In addition to the Project 30 report, surveys given over four quarters (Spring 1989 to Spring 1990) asked current student teachers to indicate how often they used strategies from their methodology courses during their preservice teaching. The intent of the survey was to determine which strategies students transferred to actual classroom instruction and curriculum design. Results from this survey (Fauske and Butler, 1989), along with Project 30 data, clearly indicated that transfer of knowledge base to school practice is a difficult process that needs further guidance and support from teacher educators.

Development and Description of Project Design

These sources of background data provided the impetus for the project team to design and pilot a student teaching experience radically different from the current program.

Traditionally, secondary education students complete their certification requirements concurrently with those in their major/minor

area of emphasis. They enter the education program as juniors and complete the core classes prior to a full-time ten week student teaching experience. Following their student teaching, they synthesize the experience in Senior Seminar, a 3-hour course that completes their certification requirements. Most students graduate with a teaching certificate within the four-year time frame.

Our project model attempts to implement Ayers' (1989) admonition to immerse our students in the life of classrooms and allow a substantial part of the teacher education curriculum to emerge from the actual challenges and concerns they face in their practical work.

For this immersion to happen, student teachers in the pilot project teach half-time at a central location for a full public school semester (20 weeks). They attend college courses in methodology and pedagogy in the afternoons at the site school. Daily contact among student teachers with their college supervisors enables personal observations and actual teaching experience to serve as a base for discussion, inquiry, and analysis. In addition, as part of their Senior Seminar requirement, student teachers pair with cooperating teachers and/or college faculty on an action research project. Through supplementary seminars, they will learn how to conduct research in their classroooms and use the data collected to improve their overall teaching.

Other unique features the pilot program offers student teachers:

a) an initial retreat for all participants prior to the 1990-91 Fall school opening;
b) closely monitored supervision by an interdisciplinary team;
c) a network of professionals and resources involved in the project;
d) the opportunity to teach at both the jr. and sr. high level;
e) critiquing by use of video-taped performances;
f) daily practice in metacognition and reflective teaching.

Selection of Students, Cooperating Teachers, and Schools

For this project, we narrowed our pool of student teachers to one major (English) and to seniors far enough along in their English coursework to have a working knowledge of their content. Admission to Teacher Education was a prerequisite, but candidates need not have

started their core classes in secondary education. Faculty recommendations on student ability and probability of successful completion in the project were also considered.

Selecting school sites and cooperating teachers was a more complex procedure, mainly because WSU has so little influence in the selection process under traditional placement. Generally, the teacher education department sends a quarterly list of eligible student teachers, their major/minor specialities, and the students' personal requests for school site to five neighboring school districts. District personnel determine the appropriate school sites and principals most often select the available cooperating teachers. Criteria for selection is unspecified, often arbitrary, and rarely consistent across districts.

For the Hemingway project to be successful, we needed the support of district coordinators and school administrators. In addition, we needed to find a cadre of cooperating teachers, all in one department, who could commit to the project goals and devote themselves to a year-long collaborative endeavor.

Our final selection of Davis High and Kaysville Junior High located in Davis District resulted from the following: 1) enthusiasm and support from the schools' principals, 2) a core of reputable teachers recommended by department chairs and principals, 3) previous inservice courses with WSU professors, 4) prior experience as cooperating teachers for WSU student teachers, 5) receptiveness of faculty to the project, and 6) proximity of the two schools. Compensation for pilot cooperating teachers includes a stipend of $300 per quarter, 3 hours graduate credit in mentoring, and an optional 3 hours graduate credit in classroom action research.

Organizational Structure of On-Site Supervision and Instruction

Effective collaboration between six faculty members from several departments has only been possible by having a well-organized structure for the supervisory and instructional components of the project. Weekly meetings among participants have facilitated how each faculty member contributes time on-site to instruction and supervision. This structure has allowed us to assess our supervision consistently and continually from the outset of the program.

Learning how to integrate our disciplines (English and Education) so that a coherent curriculum results and transfer of learning occurs has been a major challenge. In order to use the student teaching experience as a central focus of instruction, we could not assign a sequential schedule of courses, with one course following another and the curriculum predetermined from traditional syllabi. With an immersion-into-practice model, students seem to need to know everything at once. Weekly processing of their most immediate problems, concerns, and challenges has directed what we teach next and how effectively they apply their learning to an immediate classroom situation. For example, classroom management and discipline monopolized the seminar instruction for the first two weeks. Our experience seems to substantiate Cohn and Gellman's (1988) STEP phases of developmental curriculum, moving from learning about teacher presence and authority to the craft and analysis of teaching.

In addition, cooperating teachers' recommendations and observations have been used to determine what they feel our student teachers need to learn as soon as possible. Learning how to write effective lesson plans, give clear instructions, and facilitate discussion have been primary concerns from their perspective.

Primary responsibility for the instructional component rests with two college supervisors, one from the Education Department and one from the English department. This responsibility rotates to two new faculty every four weeks. The other four supervisors are encouraged to attend any instructional session as resource persons, presenters, or evaluators. Generally, we have at least two faculty participants present for every session. Still, assigning faculty to curriculum cycles has freed our time for on-campus commitments.

Project Investigations and Research Agenda

Our program is not a single, tightly controlled experiment in one specific, limited aspect of teacher education. It is a multifaceted program that attempts to implement certain national challenges for restructuring teacher education. As the project goals and scope suggest, numerous areas for investigation have surfaced as on-going threads

throughout the dimensions of the project: the nature and effects of collaboration, partnerships with public schools, the socialization of preservice teachers into the profession, the integration of educational theory and practice.

Key issues and questions our project explores include:

- What is a working definition of collaboration? Is it possible to truly collaborate across disciplines, around perceived roles of college faculty and public school teachers, between teacher and learner?
- How will instruction in mentoring affect the cooperating teacher-student teacher relationship?
- What are the effects of bonding on the socialization process of student teachers?
- Is on-site instruction more effective than on-campus instruction? How does concommittant contextual learning influence the preparation and performance of preservice teachers?
- What is the profile of an effective cooperating teacher? An effective college supervisor?

Methods of data collection vary from weekly journal entries by all participants, anecdotal and reflective summaries by cooperating teachers, first day videotapes, inventories, questionnaires, attitudinal surveys, and evaluation forms.

One of the most intriguing issues we are studying is the effects of bonding on the socialization process of student teachers. Preliminary data support the necessity of pre-school meetings between cooperating teachers, supervisors, and student teachers to establish mutual trust, shared goals and agendas, and management styles.

The project's pre-school two-day retreat allowed time for relationships to develop outside of traditionally defined roles. Results of an evaluation survey completed by all retreat participants indicated that barriers of communication, sometimes never overcome in the traditional student teaching forum, were set aside through this informal setting. Cooperating teachers reported that it is absolutely necessary to have time with their student teachers before the regular school year begins. They value the opportunity to get to know the student teacher they will work with on a personal as well as professional level. They enjoyed sharing

their philosophies of education and their hopes and expectations for the coming year. The student teachers, on the other hand, were able to see how master teachers plan a year, coordinate schedules, and create effective environments for learning even before the opening day of school. The retreat helped alleviate fears generated by inexperience, unknown expectations, and dependency.

One central issue of the project continues to be the effects of interdisciplinary, collaborative supervision and on-site, contextual instruction on the teacher education curriculum. We are presently in the process of substantiating the following effects:

1. Supervision informs the direction and substance of our instruction. Because supervisors are both instructing and supervising concurrently, our observations and conferencing identify needs that have not yet been met in the curriculum sessions. Adjustments to ongoing curriculum goals are possible in our weekly staff meetings. We may change instructors for a day or a week to allow the supervisor with the most expertise in a particular area to address student teachers' needs. For example, although lesson planning was taught and modeled at the beginning of the quarter, our supervision continued to identified student problems in formulating objectives, selecting relevant material and evaluating their plan according to the objectives. Seven weeks later, in a more focused lesson about planning, students used their own lesson plans as scripts for revision. In this way the curriculum becomes genuinely student centered and very dynamic.

2. On-site contextual seminars allow student teachers to place their classroom experiences in a theoretical framework. Students often lack the contextual knowledge about learning situations to connect a particular theoretical or philosophical approach to the secondary classroom. They forget the content of an education class before they encounter teaching situations in which that knowledge is applicable. In contrast, students in this pilot often offer their own classroom experiences as examples for discussion, making immediate connections with the theoretical framework being built in the course. Discipline situations they encounter are shared in light of discipline models introduced in the session. Writing assignments they create are assessed in light of the compositional theories learned in class. Participants immediately implement practices based on the knowledge of research and

theory gleaned during instruction and quickly see the results of their applications. Using their own teaching experiences as the core frame of reference for decisions about pedagogy, these novices return to the sessions with a broader, more informed judgment.

3. Supervisors tailor their intervention according to the developmental stage of the student teacher at the time. That student teachers progress developmentally from self-survival to inquiry of craft, from specific strategies to their impact and implications (Cohn and Gellman, 1988) suggests supervisors need a repertoire of approaches for intervention. If the student teacher is struggling with classroom management, the supervisor directly offers concrete strategies for gaining control. The supervisor elevates the discourse to more global issues when the novice teacher begins exploring learner needs and effects of instruction. In order for developmental supervision to occur, supervisors must be aware of the continuity and history of the classroom situation they are observing. More frequent, appropriate, and better informed supervision is an ancillary outcome. Consequently, our pilot student teachers seem more receptive to their supervisors' guidance and suggestions because they know the university observer understands the context from which decisions are made.

4. Collaborative supervision validates styles of supervision and offers student teachers more than one mentoring model. As a group of supervisors, we have assessed our own modes of supervision and found we represent the entire spectrum of supervisory styles outlined by Zahorick (1989). While some of us lean toward a more behaviorial prescriptive model, others act as facilitators of personal growth and idea formation in relation to student teacher intervention. Because our styles differ, we use the strengths of each other's style to solve problems in supervision and consider this diversity of styles to be a powerful component of our collaboration.

Teaching ourselves to be more reflective about what we do has been an enlightening endeavor. What we have lacked to date in scientific rigor we have made up in unrestrained audacity. We believe our experimentation will generate many findings that should lead to more tightly controlled studies. Reflection of this nature has, if nothing else, created a disposition toward rethinking the fundamental issues of teaching and teacher education.

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